

# The Trey O'Hearts

By Louis Joseph Vance

The photo-drama corresponding to the incidents of "The Trey O'Hearts" may now be seen at the leading picture theaters. By this arrangement with the Universal Film Mfg. Co. it is therefore not only possible to read "The Trey O'Hearts" in this paper, but also to see each incident of it at the moving picture theatres.

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## I—THE MESSAGE OF THE ROSE.

Lapped deep in the leather-bound luxury of an ample lounge-chair, walled apart from the world by the venerable solitude of the library of London's most exclusive club, Mr. Alan Law sprawled (largely on the neck) and squinting discontentedly down his nose, admitted that he was exhaustively bored.

Now the chair he filled so gracelessly stood by an open window, some twenty feet below which lay a sizable walled garden, an old English garden in full flower. And through the window, now and then, a half-hearted breeze wafted gusts of warm air, suave and enervating with the heavy fragrance of English roses.

Mr. Law drank deep of it, and in spite of his spiritual earnest, sighed slightly and shut his eyes.

An unspoken word troubled the depth of his consciousness, so that old memories stirred and struggled to its surface. The word was "Rose" and for the time seemed to be the name neither of a woman nor of a flower, but oddly of both, as though the two things were one. His mental vision, bringing the gap of a year, conjured up the vision of a lithe, sweet silhouette in white, with red roses at her belt, posed on a terrace of the Riviera against the burning Mediterranean blue.

Mr. Law was dully conscious that he ought to be sorry about something. But he was really very drowsy indeed; and so, drinking deep of wisecent or rose he fell gently asleep.

The clock was striking four when he awoke and before closing his eyes he had noticed that its hands indicated ten minutes to four. So he could not have slept very long.

For some few seconds Alan did not move, but reared as he was, incredulously regarding a rose which had materialized mysteriously upon the little table at his elbow. He was quite sure it had not been there when he closed his eyes, and almost as sure that it was not real.

And in that instant of awakening the magic fragrance of the rose-gar-

den seemed to be even more strong and loving sweet than ever.

Then he put out a gingerly hand and discovered that it was real beyond all question. A warm red rose, freshly plucked, drops of water trembling and sparkling like tiny diamonds on the velvet of its fleecy petals. And when impulsively he took it by the stem, he discovered a most indisputable thorn which did service for the traditional touch.

(Convinced that he wasn't dreaming, Alan transferred the rose to his sound hand, and meditatively sucked his thumb. Then he jumped up from the chair and clared suspiciously around the room. It was true that a practical joke in that solemn atmosphere were a thing unthinkable, still, there was the rose.

There was no one but himself in the library. Perplexed to exasperation, Alan fled the club, only pausing on the way out to annex the envelope he found addressed to him in the letter-rack.

It was a blank white envelope of good quality, the address typewritten, the stamp English, and bore a London postmark half illegible.

Alan tore the envelope open in absent-minded fashion—and started as if stung. The enclosure was a simple playing-card—a Trey of hearts!

As for Alan Law, he wandered homewards in a state of stupefaction. He could read quite well the message of the rose. He could not soon forget that year-old parting with the Rose of the Riviera: "You say you love me but may not marry me—and we must part. Then promise this, that if ever you change your mind, you'll send for me." And her promise: "I will send you a rose."

But the year had lapsed with never a sign from her, so that he had grown accustomed to the unflattering belief that she had forgotten him.

And now the sign had come—but what the deuce did the Trey of Hearts mean?

When morning came London had lost Alan Law. No man of his acquaintance nor any woman—had received the least warning of his disappearance. He was simply and anticlimactically removed from English ken.

## II—THE S OF THE THREE.

Out-of-door, a brazen noon, a clamorous life of New York running as quicksilver through its brilliant streets. Within-doors, neither sound nor sunbeam disturbed a perennial quiet that was yet not peace.

The room was a wide, deep well of night, the haunt of teeming shadows and minister silences.



"AND THEN, IT CAME TO PASS THAT WE BOTH LOVED ONE WOMAN—"

Little, indeed, was visible beyond the lonely shape that brooded over it, the figure of an old man motionless in a great, leather-bound chair.

His hair was as white as his heart was black. The rack of his bones, clothed in a thick black dressing-gown with waist-cord of crimson silk, from the thighs down was covered by a black woolen rug. He stared unblink-

ing at nothing; a man seven-eights dead, completely paralyzed but for his head and his left arm.

Presently a faint clicking signal disturbed the stillness. Seneca Trine put forth his left hand and touched one of the desk. Something else clicked—this time a latch. There was the faintest possible noise of a closing door, and

a smallish man stole noiselessly into the light, paused beside the desk and waited respectfully for leave to speak.

"Well?"  
"A telegram, sir—from England.  
"Give it me!"

"Send my daughter Judith here!"  
Two minutes later a young woman in street dress was admitted to the chamber of shadows.

"You sent for me, father?"  
"Sit down."  
She found and placed a chair at the desk, and obediently settled herself in it.

"Judith—tell me—what day is this?"  
"My birthday. I am twenty-one."  
"And your sister's birthday? Rose, too, is twenty-one."  
"Yes."  
"You could have forgotten that," the old man pursued almost mockingly. "Do you really dislike your twin sister so intensely?"

The girl's voice trembled. "You know," she said, "we have nothing in common—beyond parentage and this abominable resemblance. Our natures differ as light from darkness."  
"And which would you say was light?"

"Hardly my own; I'm no hypocrite. Rose is everything that they tell me my mother was, while I—the girl and I strangely—I think—I am more yet, daughter than my mother's."

A nod of the white head confirmed the suggestion. "It is true. I have watched you closely, Judith, perhaps more closely than even you know. Before I was brought to this—the wasted hand made a significant gesture—"I was a man of strong passions. Your mother never loved, but rather feared me. And Rose is the mirror of her mother's nature, gentle, unselfish, sympathetic. But you, Judith, you are like a second self to me."

An accent of profound satisfaction informed his voice. The girl waited in a silence that was tensely expectant.

"Then, if on this your birthday I were to ask a service of you that might injuriously affect the happiness of your sister—?"

The girl laughed briefly. "Only ask it."  
"And how far would you go to do my will?"

"Where would you stop in the service of one you loved?"

Seneca Trine nodded gravely. And after a brief pause, "Rose is in love," he announced.  
"Oh, I knew—I know!" the father affirmed with a faint ring of satisfaction. "I am old, a cripple, prisoner of this living tomb; but all things I should know—somehow—I come to know in course of time!"

"It's true—that Englishman she scraped acquaintance with on the Riviera last year—what's his name?"

Law, Alan Law."  
In the main," the father corrected mildly, "you are right. Only, he's not English. His father was Wellington Law, of Law & Son."

She knew better than to interrupt, but her seeming patience was belied by the whitening knuckles of a hand that lay within the pool of blood-red light.

And presently the deep voice rolled on: "Law and I were once friends; then—it came to pass that we loved one woman, your mother. I won her—"  
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